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Joha Makes a Wish

Sandra L. Tidwell

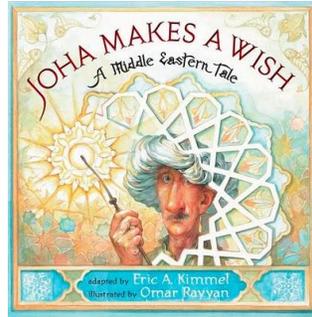
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Kimmel, Eric A. *Joha Makes a Wish: A Middle Eastern Tale*. Illustrated by Omar Rayyan. Marshall Cavendish, 2010. ISBN 9780761455998. \$17.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Folklore; Humorous stories; Picture books;

Subject: Wishes--Juvenile fiction; Arabs--Juvenile fiction; Middle East--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Joha, a poor tired Arab on his way to Baghdad, rests in the shade of an old wall when suddenly the wall topples, revealing a sealed jar. Inside is a note wrapped around a stick--a magic wishing stick! Joha tries it out, but finds out that instead of what he wishes for, he gets the opposite! When he arrives in Baghdad, he tries to stay away from others so as not to cause them the problems he is having. However, when the Sultan comes by and the guards see that Joha is not shouting praise to him along with everyone else, Joha is brought before him. Although Joha tries to explain about the problem wishing stick, the Sultan asks Joha for just a "little" wish—to remove the wart from his nose. No sooner does Joha make the wish than the Sultan's small wart becomes a mass of purple warts! Joha is terrified and runs away. An old shopkeeper hides him and, after listening to Joha's wishing stick troubles, tells him the reason why the wish stick isn't operating correctly.

This is a "wishing" story with a different twist. Joha's response to his newfound wisdom is the opposite of the Golden Rule. In the end, Joha discovers, as most characters in wish stories, that he is content to be what he was before the wishing stick came on the scene. The clincher for this selection is the illustrations by the gifted Omar Rayyan! The watercolor illustrations are realistic, action-packed, expressive, and even hilarious. Examples include Joha glaring at the stick as he wishes, "You wicked stick! I wish you would disappear"; the confused expression on the donkey's face when Joha tries to carry him; the hopeful sultan when Joha wishes his warts away; and pensive Joha as he considers his options now that the stick is no longer in his hands. This fun story would be a great read-aloud! What would happen if all your wishes came true? How about the opposite? It's worth thinking about!

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